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# THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Ἐξίρη το Ὀθια ἀν ἡνα ἡάρουις, ἀγυρ ριόδάνη αιρ αν οἰαλαμ δεαῖτοιλ το να δάοιμις.

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## GALILEO—No. III.

IN our last two numbers we have laid before our readers an account of some of the principal events in the life of Galileo, and we now proceed to discuss how far the credit of the Church of Rome is affected by her treatment of this philosopher. In considering what can be said on the Roman Catholic side of the question we make use of a clever pamphlet published in the series called "The Clifton Tracts," and which professes to contain the substance of two articles on the same subject, published, the one in the *Dublin Review* for January, 1838, the other in the *Rambler* for July, 1852.

We have received a letter from a correspondent, finding fault with us for adopting in our narrative the most lenient view of the persecution of Galileo, and for softening, as far as possible, our account of the ill usage he met with. We have to reply that we should always much prefer to understate rather than overstate our case, and we particularly wished that the discussion in the present article should not be complicated by our having made any statements as to the accuracy of which there could be the least dispute. If we had had any doubts as to the wisdom of the course we adopted they would have been removed by the perusal of the Roman Catholic tract to which we have just referred, which forcibly illustrates how great an advantage is gained for the defender of a bad cause by any over-statement on the part of his opponents.

In fact, when you have been in the wrong, and richly deserve a scolding, the most approved method of getting with credit out of the scrape is to wait until those who have good reason to be angry with you make use, in their wrath, of some unadvisedly strong expression. Then it is your turn: you may raise an outcry at the undeserved imputations that have been cast on you; exaggerate as much as possible the reproaches that have been heaped on you; and if you play your part well, the original offence may be forgotten, and you may pass yourself off successfully as the aggrieved party. It is on this system that the *Rambler* and the *Dublin Review* almost invariably construct their articles when they have to defend their Church on any of those points on which her doctrines or her actions have reasonably excited prejudice against her. Their plan is to commence the article with a highly coloured account of some of the harsh things which Protestants have said against them, (and probably of some that they have not said); and then, by way of contrast, to produce the maligned doctrine with everything offensive carefully kept in the background, so as to enlist all the reader's sympathies on the side of injured innocence and to make them wonder how anything so harmless should be assailed by such malignant representations.

This device has been practised so often that it has become quite threadbare; but we do not know that we have ever seen a more dexterous use made of it than when it was employed to represent the persecution of Galileo as a kind of graceful homage to science. The article begins by informing us that Protestant writers (we are not told who) had asserted that Galileo had been kept for five years in the dungeons of the Inquisition;

that he had been put on the rack; that his eyes had been put out by the cruel inquisitors! whereas, in reality, his penance had been nothing worse than the obligation to recite the penitential psalms once a week, and his place of imprisonment the Dominican convent, where the officers of the Inquisition themselves resided, or the "delightful palace" of the Tuscan ambassador at Rome, whence he was allowed at length to retire to his own villa near Florence, and to remain there without molestation till the day of his death, some nine or ten years afterwards. And having so far smoothed down matters, the writer feels that he has a right to make merry at the philosopher's sufferings. "Certainly, this was a most severe and cruel punishment, was it not? Precisely what every Protestant would naturally have expected from so bloodthirsty a tribunal as the Inquisition is known to be. Need I say more concerning the torturing, the putting out of eyes, the long and tedious confinement for one, three, or five years in the dungeons of the Inquisition of this martyr of science, Galileo Galilei."

As the story that the inquisitors put out Galileo's eyes (wherever the writer found it) does not produce an impression more unlike the truth than this very coloured picture of the treatment of the philosopher, we beg to remind our readers of some of the uncontested facts already laid before them, which may cause them to doubt whether imprisonment is so very delightful a thing as it has been just represented. It must be remembered that Galileo was obliged at the age of seventy, and in a very infirm state of health, to undertake a long journey, a thing much more formidable then than now, in these railroad days; that on his appearance at Rome, instead of being surrounded, as formerly, by crowds of philosophic disputants, he found himself unable to see any but his most intimate friends; that the confinement he had to suffer affected his health so seriously that it became necessary to obtain for him by a formal permission the great indulgence of being allowed to take, in a half closed carriage, the exercise necessary for his health. This was all previous to his sentence. A cloud hangs over the details of the process by which his abjuration was brought about; nor are we in a position to contradict with any certainty those who maintain that torture was one of the means employed to dispel his scientific heresies. We are content, however, to give the mildest interpretation to the "rigoroso esame" which the records of the Inquisition state that he underwent. When he was allowed to leave Rome for Sienna, the Archbishop of Sienna received strict injunctions on no account to suffer him to quit the confines of his palace. When, after some time, he fell into a state of extreme ill health, and requested leave to quit his own villa and go to Florence for medical advice, he was so far from obtaining the desired permission that it was intimated that any additional importunities would be noticed by depriving him of the partial liberty he was then allowed to enjoy.

From the instances we have given, our readers can judge whether it is a correct representation that the

inquisitors, being compelled by duty to punish Galileo, were induced by their great love of science to inflict only the merest form of punishment. The restrictions of which we have given specimens involve real and substantial privations, and though, we doubt not, instances of the tender mercies of the Inquisition, are yet sufficiently cruel.

Let us suppose, for instance, that the Archbishop of Canterbury were to take it into his head that Lord Rosse's great telescope was dangerous to the Christian faith (and proud as we are of our illustrious countryman, we cannot flatter ourselves that the position which he occupies in the scientific world approaches that which was held by Galileo)—let us suppose that our astronomer was compelled to go over to London to answer for his heresies; that no plea of age or ill health was allowed to excuse him from the journey; that he was there obliged to observe the strictest seclusion; and that after some months' delay there, when eventually allowed to return home, he was ordered to consider himself as a prisoner in his own house at Parsonstown, and that he asked in vain for permission to come up to Dublin for medical advice. Let us suppose all this, and what should we say of the clergyman who should set up for such treatment such a defence as this: "To be sure, the offence of the heretical telescope was one which could not be overlooked; but, then, consider how mildly he was treated. He was not put into a dungeon with common felons, but allowed to occupy in the prison the governor's own private apartments; he was not kept in jail for five years; we did not put him on the rack; and, above all, we did not put out his eyes!"

We have now enabled our readers to judge what was the actual amount of severity which was used towards Galileo, and it must be admitted by all that the rulers of the Church of Rome in those days did endeavour with all the weight of their authority to put down the dissemination of doctrines which have since become the established truths of science. It is urged in reply, however, that Protestants have been guilty of similar narrow-mindedness, and that Kepler, for instance, met with opposition in a Protestant country for teaching the very same doctrines as those propounded by Galileo. We care not to discuss how much the opposition which Kepler met with has been exaggerated and misrepresented; for we cheerfully give the persecutors of Galileo the full benefit of the apology that the error which misled them was sanctioned by the spirit of their age, and that its influence has extended to Protestants as well as to Roman Catholics. The condemnation of Galileo is far from being the only occasion on which theology has attempted to fetter the movements of science; has dictated to her what language she should speak; and has endeavoured to stifle her voice altogether if she refuse to repeat acquiescently the words which have been put into her mouth. It is only in later times that the principle has been recognised (can we say that it is even yet fully understood?) that since it is the Author of nature who has given us the Bible, His two great books cannot speak contradictory language, and that it is impossible that anything shall be found in the volume of His works which shall be opposed to what is written in the volume of His word. And the true way of showing our faith in the divine origin of our Scriptures is by leaving philosophy at perfect liberty to work out her own conclusions, in the full confidence that true theology and true philosophy cannot in the end be opposed to each other. When men attempt to twist and distort the facts which science reveals into conformity with what they conceive to be the true interpretation of Scripture, they are, as Bacon expresses it, guilty of the impiety of thinking that they honour the Author of truth by offering to Him the unclean sacrifice of a lie. And such an attempt is as impolitic as it is wrong. Those who, in their jealous fears, lest philosophy should be opposed to religion, have denied to the former liberty of utterance have only deprived themselves of the possibility of obtaining from science any confirmation of the truth of religion, since no value can be attached to favourable testimony given by lips which are not free to utter any language but that of praise. Science, instead of being allowed to be the useful friend of religion, is made her unprofitable slave, and is sure, when she receives freedom, to become her dan-

\* When we wrote last month, we had not been able to persuade ourselves that it was possible the inquisitors could have been capable of using violence to the person of a venerable old man of such celebrity as Galileo. But we find it impossible to resist the evidence of the inquisitors' own words, interpreted by a comparison with their language in other similar cases. In the sentence on Galileo, the inquisitors, after describing Galileo's defence of himself, proceed to say—"Whereas, it appeared to us that you had not disclosed the whole truth with respect to your intentions, we thought it necessary to proceed to the rigorous examination of you, in which you answered like a good Catholic." Now, these words "rigoroso esame" are the ordinary inquisition phrase for an examination accompanied by personal severities. Compare, for example, the sentence on Fulgentio Manfredi, of the severities used towards whom we have independent proof. "Et parendoci che non havessi detto la verità intorno ai complici, ordinassimo, che contro di te si venisse al 'rigoroso esame': solamente per sapere se in dette tue opinioni heretiche et erronee havessi havuto complici. Il che essendo stato eseguito," &c. "And as it appeared that you had not spoken the truth with regard to your accomplices, we commanded that recourse should be had to the 'rigorous examination': solely for the purpose of ascertaining whether in these, your heretical and erroneous opinions, you have had accomplices. The which having been executed," &c. &c.—Gibbings's Fulgentio Manfredi, p. 47. The above extract leaves no room for doubt what the inquisitors meant by this euphemistic phrase, "rigorous examination."

Accordingly, in Galileo's own letters, written from his own villa, he counts himself as in prison, and reckons up the number of years he has spent there. The statements that Galileo was three or five years in the prison of the Inquisition were probably founded on such passages in his own letters.

gerous enemy. "Science, when condemned to work in chains as the bond slave of theology, takes at last a stern revenge on its oppressor." If the advocates of revelation choose to represent a belief in the truths of religion as inseparable from a belief in an erroneous philosophy, then when men become too enlightened to be able to retain the latter belief any longer, they will be strongly tempted to give up the former also. All the Papal decrees in the world will not hinder scientific errors from being exploded in the end. "It is in vain," said Pascal, "that you have procured against Galileo a decree from Rome condemning his opinion of the earth's motion. Assuredly, that will never prove it to be at rest; and if we have unerring observations proving that it turns round, not all mankind together can keep it from turning, nor themselves from turning with it." And then, when the errors are exploded, how is it possible but that the authority by which they have been always defended should suffer also in men's estimation? Even so long ago as the times of St. Augustine that father complains of the contempt which was cast upon Scripture by its being used in the defence of scientific error. "There are many things," says he, "concerning the distances and movements of the heavenly bodies, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the seasons of the year, the properties of plants, animals, and minerals, and so forth, which those who are not Christians can know on most certain grounds of reason and experience. And it is most disgraceful and most dangerous that a Christian should be heard by unbelievers advancing on these subjects opinions so extravagantly erroneous that it is impossible for the hearers to refrain from laughter, and professing to ground these opinions on our sacred books. And we should not be sorry at such a man's being laughed at for his errors, if it were not that those 'who are without,' and for whose salvation we are solicitous, are thereby led to despise our sacred writers, as ignorant and unlearned. For they detect Christians going astray in subjects which they know perfectly well, and maintaining their mistaken opinions by the authority of our Scriptures; and how, then, is it possible that they should believe what these same Scriptures declare concerning the resurrection of the dead and the hope of eternal life and the kingdom of heaven, when they are told that these Scriptures contain statements which their own experience assures them are undoubtedly false."<sup>4</sup>

We are sorry to confess that these cautions of St. Augustine did not meet with that attention from Christians which their good sense deserved, and that Protestants as well as Roman Catholics have strengthened the hands of unbelievers by staking the credit of the Scriptures on the maintenance of erroneous systems of philosophy. But there is one great difference between this error, as committed by Protestants and by the rulers of the Church of Rome. Protestants do not pretend to be infallible. When the errors of Protestants are pointed out to us we can afford to acknowledge them candidly, and to hope that we may take warning by their example to avoid committing similar mistakes ourselves. But Roman Catholics cannot with equal cheerfulness own that mistakes have been committed by an authority which they regard as infallible. For what would become of their Church's claim to infallibility if she has gone wrong in her decisions on almost the only question on which it is possible to bring the truth of her statements to a decisive test? She may make boldly what assertions she pleases concerning the unseen world, secure that "dead men tell no tales," and that it will be long before any one comes back to tell that he looked there in vain for purgatory, or that the indulgences in which he had been led to put his trust had turned out to be waste paper. But when she undertook to decide whether the sun goes round the earth or the earth goes round the sun, she rashly committed herself on a question on which it is easy to test her accuracy. And if every schoolboy now knows that the opinions which she adopted are wrong, how can we be expected to believe in her pretensions to infallible correctness on other subjects?

This is really the most important question raised by the condemnation of Galileo; but we are content to follow the order pursued by the apologist whose tract we are reviewing, and to postpone the discussion about infallibility until we have first touched on the other topics to which the writer referred to has given prior consideration.

And first, he tells us that whatever may have been the Church of Rome's treatment of Galileo, nothing can be more untrue than that she is in any way suspicious or jealous of scientific discovery: nay, that she was not even opposed to this very doctrine of the earth's motion. And increasing in courage, he goes on to say, in the words of the *Dublin Review*, "that it is to the Church of Rome we are mainly indebted for the new theory; that in Rome it had its birth: in Rome it was fostered and nurtured, and that but for the encouragement of popes and cardinals the adoption of the new theory might have been thrown back to a distance which we cannot now try to calculate." The proof of the startling assertion that "to the pontiffs and dignitaries of Rome we are

mainly indebted for the Copernican system" consists of two facts: first, that a cardinal, namely, Nicholas of Cusa, was one of the earliest who propounded the hypothesis of the earth's motion. Secondly, that Copernicus himself was for some time a professor at Rome, and there delivered lectures on his new theory to overwhelming crowds; that a cardinal offered to bear the expense of the publication of his great work, and that it was dedicated to a pope.

It is quite true that Copernicus was, in his early life, a professor at Rome; but the assertion that he lectured there on his new theory appears to be quite gratuitous, for there does not seem any reason to suppose that he adopted the philosophic system which bears his name until many years after he left Rome. It is true, also, that the great work of Copernicus was dedicated to a pope; but when the apologist tells us that the work "was sent forth to the world bearing on its front the name and sanction of the head of the Catholic Church," he ought to have added that the head of the Catholic Church afterwards forbade his subjects to read the book, and that this prohibition continued in force for some two hundred years.

It is quite ludicrous for the advocates of the Church of Rome to take credit for the fact that the men of science and learning who lived before the Reformation were not Protestants, or that they were even ecclesiastics. The spirit of inquiry which was aroused at the revival of letters in the fifteenth century found at first sufficient scope for its exercise without applying itself to any examination of the systems of theology then prevalent. It was only natural that scientific errors should be examined and corrected before men found courage to question the truth of other doctrines handed to them on more venerable authority. And so there was at first no suspicion that the progress of enlightenment would prove fatal to the Church of Rome herself. Such of the higher ecclesiastics as made the most creditable use of their immense revenues, scrupled not to patronise a man of science, as they might a painter or a poet. As long as science could be kept in leading strings she was petted and encouraged; but as soon as she showed an independent spirit, and began to speak with a voice of her own, the Church of Rome did her best to silence her, and has ever since regarded her with jealousy and suspicion.

It is worth while to explain to our readers how it was that the speculations of Copernicus about the earth's motion were tolerated by some ecclesiastics, while the writings of Galileo on the same subject were rigidly condemned. The difference was, that in the work of Copernicus some pains were taken (in order to avoid shocking existing prejudices) to represent the notion of the earth's motion not as a true account of what actually takes place, but as a mathematical fiction contrived for the more convenient calculation of the places of the heavenly bodies. The preface (not written, however, by Copernicus himself) dwells at length upon this point. "It is not necessary," it says, "that hypotheses should be true or even probable; it is sufficient that they lead to results of calculation which agree with observation;" and it concludes—"Neither let any one, so far as hypotheses are concerned, expect anything certain from astronomy, since that science can afford nothing of this kind: lest, in case he should adopt for truth things feigned for another purpose, he should leave this study more foolish than when he came." Presented in this view, the ecclesiastical authorities had no objection to the hypothesis of the earth's motion. And if Copernicus had carried out this consistently his book might have escaped condemnation; for when it was ultimately placed in the index of prohibited books it was with a *Nisi corrigatur*—that is to say, until some one should go over the book and correct every place which seemed to assert that the earth actually moved round the sun into a statement merely that such a supposition, though untrue, would afford convenient mathematical rules for calculating the motions of the planets.

A distinguished living writer tells a story of an Oxford student, who, on being instructed in the proposition of Euclid which asserts that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the sides, followed the demonstration with great apparent intelligence, admired very much the beauty of the proof, but added, *But it is not really so: is it?*

Now, the whole of Galileo's offence was, that he would maintain that "it was really so." If he would only have been satisfied with putting forward his arguments as ingenious sophisms, as clever mathematical puzzles, as hypotheses leading to rules for expeditious calculation, he would probably have been allowed to speculate unmolested.

Some years before, a school of philosophers had invented a distinction which might have served his purpose; for, when convicted of propagating doctrines leading even to atheism, they would gravely reply that though their opinions were philosophically true, they must own that they were theologically false. And though this distinction had fallen into discredit by the time of Galileo, yet there is little doubt that the Church would have let him alone if he had condescended at least to disguise his dissent from her teaching, and outwardly to profess his belief that it is one of the sacred truths of our religion that the earth is stationary in the middle of the universe, and that the sun and planets move daily round it. But though it was

proved afterwards that Galileo had not the courage of a martyr, he was too honest a man, and had too great a love for truth, to be unfaithful to his convictions, or to keep secret the opinions which he believed to be really true. He found that the appearances of the heavenly bodies always exactly corresponded to his calculations, made on the supposition that the earth moved round the sun; and he could not help, then, believing that the earth actually did go round the sun. And believing it, he could not help saying so; nor could he be satisfied to teach, as it would have been more prudent to do, that theologians were quite right in asserting the earth to be stationary, although mathematicians might find it more convenient to make their calculations on the supposition that it moved.

We can see now how it was that Galileo could not help saying something as to the bearings of Scripture on his philosophical opinions. Believing, as he did, that the doctrine of the earth's motion was not a mere mathematical fiction, but an absolute truth, he could not acquiesce in the conclusion that the Scriptures taught the direct contrary. From reading the statements of Roman Catholic writers that Galileo was only condemned for quitting his mathematics and intruding into the province of theology, one would imagine that Galileo had attempted to establish the earth's motion by an array of Bible texts, and to prove that the opposite doctrine was an anti-scriptural heresy. So far from this, all he contended for was toleration for his own belief. He only endeavoured to make out that there was nothing in the Bible which forbade him to believe that the earth moved. He urged that the Scriptures were not intended to teach astronomy (not more than one of the planets being even named in the sacred volume), and that the fact that the Bible employs the popular language on this subject does not forbid us to hold (if there should be good reason to do so) that that popular language is not scientifically correct. In the name of common sense, we ask how was it possible that if he believed that nothing false is taught in the Scriptures as an article of faith, and if he believed that the doctrine that the earth does not move is false, he could avoid asserting that the doctrine that the earth is at rest is not taught in the Bible as an article of faith.

Nothing is so puzzling as a real love of truth to people who are not possessed of it themselves. The good old orthodox theologians of Galileo's day could not imagine what motive the philosopher could have for persisting in saying that it was the earth which went round the sun, and not the sun which went round the earth. That he should say so merely because he was convinced it was true was quite beyond their comprehension. It must be from love of opposition, from a wish to insult them, from sheer obstinacy, self-conceit, or some other unworthy motive. And the Roman Catholic apologists of the present day echo the cry. What obstinacy! what imprudence! what impetuosity! what hot-headed meddling with what did not concern him. Why could he not stick to his mathematics, and allow theologians to decide as to the doctrine of Scripture? "Galileo ought not to travel out of the limits of physics and mathematics," said Cardinal Barberini, afterwards Pope Urban VIII. "Declaring the views of Scripture, theologians maintain to be their own particular province." And Cardinal Bellarmine and the Cardinal del Monte agreed in the same advice, "that he was not to interfere with the Scriptures, the interpretation of which they wish to have confined to theological professors approved and authorised for the purpose." Monseigneur Dini also writes to Galileo that he is not to "enter the sacristy;" a phrase which the Roman Catholic tract, which is our authority, freely translates, "that he is not to poke his nose into what is other people's business." And the same Roman Catholic tract challenges the admiration of Protestants for the zeal which these cardinals showed, not for any Popish sentiment, but for Holy Scriptures, in their plain, literal meaning—"those Scriptures which Catholics are accused of holding in such light esteem, and of which Protestants profess to have so jealous a care and guardianship." And our censure of the conduct of the Inquisition to Galileo is said only to prove that "with the majority of Protestants the hatred of Popery is a far stronger and more deeply rooted feeling than the love of the Bible."

We repeat again that those writers who blame Galileo "for poking his nose into other people's business" seem to us to be utterly ignorant of the nature of truth and of the obligations which it imposes. When Galileo had convinced himself by his astronomical observations that the earth was not at rest, and that the sun had not a real diurnal motion about it, how could he acquiesce in the decision of theologians that the Scriptures taught an opposite doctrine? Could the same doctrine be astronomically true and theologically false? And, surely, more true zeal for the honour of Scripture was shown by Galileo when he reasoned that the doctrine which he knew to be false could not be the doctrine of Scripture than was shown by those inquisitors who were angry with Galileo because he would not allow them, without remonstrance, to stake the credit of Scripture on the maintenance of an utterly false philosophy, and who, if allowed to have their own way, would have done as much injury to the reputation of the Bible as they have done to the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church of Rome.

This article is stretching to greater length than we had intended, and we must, therefore, not delay to come to

<sup>4</sup> Cautions for the Times, p. 505, where see some very valuable observations on this subject.

<sup>5</sup> D. Gen. ad Lit., Lib. I. c. xix. Vol. III., p. 130. Benedictine edition, Paris, 1639.

what we have described as the most vital point of all, namely, how far the Church of Rome has pledged her infallibility to the condemnation of the Copernican system. Let us enumerate the occasions on which Rome has spoken in reference to this subject. First, let us remind our readers of the decision in Galileo's case made by the Cardinals of the Inquisition (a congregation of which the Pope himself, who is supreme Inquisitor, is the sole prefect). The Inquisition deals directly with persons and facts, not with doctrines. Much in the same way as in this country it is the province of the jury to ascertain the facts, while the laying down the law is reserved for the judge; so the inquisitors examine what are the words which the accused person has spoken or written, referring it to a special committee of theologians to "qualify," or state the quality, of these words—that is to say, to determine whether or not they amount to heresy. Now, the decision of the theological committee of the Inquisition in Galileo's case was—

1st, The proposition that the sun is the centre of the world and immovable from its place is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scripture.

2nd, The proposition that the earth is not the centre of the world nor immovable, but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is also absurd, philosophically false, and, theologically considered, at least erroneous in faith.

To this the Clifton tract writer replies—"That is not all gospel; you must not interpret too literally an indictment in a court of law. As the Inquisition was a tribunal instituted for dealing with heresy, it was necessary that an offence should be described by a legal fiction as heresy, in order that the Inquisition might take cognisance of it; but they could never have intended to describe the Copernican opinions as heresy in the strict sense of the word."

But it is only necessary to observe the accurate discrimination with which the exact degree of censure due to each of the offending propositions is here measured out, to be satisfied that the "theological qualifiers" intended to be understood in the most literal sense of the words, when they described part of Galileo's doctrines as formally heretical and expressly contrary to Holy Scripture. In fact, if it were not contrary to Holy Scripture what fault could be found with it at all?

But, further, the Copernican doctrines were condemned by another tribunal. On the 5th of March, 1616, the Congregation of the Index (a committee of cardinals appointed by the Pope for the prevention of the circulation of dangerous books) published the following decree—"Since it has come to the knowledge of this holy congregation that the false Pythagorean doctrine, altogether opposed to the divine Scripture, of the mobility of the earth and the immobility of the sun, as taught by Copernicus, &c., is being promulgated and accepted by many, as may be seen by a printed letter of F. Foscarini, in which he attempts to prove that the said doctrine is consonant to truth and not opposed to Holy Scripture; therefore, lest this opinion insinuate itself further, to the damage of Catholic truth, this congregation has decreed that the said books of Copernicus, &c., be suspended till they are corrected; and that the book of Foscarini, and all others teaching the same thing, be prohibited."

Thus we have at once disposed of the pretence that what drew down condemnation on Galileo was something injudicious or offensive in his mode of teaching his opinions. We see that it was the opinions themselves which gave offence, and not the way in which they were made public. And, accordingly, the Index Prohibitorius for 1704 contains the comprehensive prohibition, "all books that teach the mobility of the earth or the immovability of the sun." And this prohibition was not suffered to remain a dead letter.

The most striking instance is afforded by the preface to what is commonly called the Jesuit edition of Newton's Principia. (The editors were, in point of fact, monks of a different religious order.) Whether apprehensive that the sale of their publication might be forbidden, or that they might suffer in some other way for the publication of a book so plainly teaching "the mobility of the earth," they tender in a preface the following apology:—

"Newton, in this third book, supposes the motion of the earth. We could not explain the author's propositions otherwise than by making the same supposition. We are, therefore, forced to sustain a character which is not our own; but we profess to pay the obsequious reverence which is due to the decrees pronounced by the supreme pontiffs against the motion of the earth."

We cannot copy this without remarking how the despotic system of the Church of Rome inevitably leads to scepticism. No one can trust his neighbour or be sure that he really believes the doctrines which he professes. No one can believe that the authors of the very intelligent commentary on Newton's Principia, to which the above advertisement was prefixed, did in their hearts reverence the decrees of the supreme pontiffs against the motion of the earth. No one can suppose that they were in reality bearing a character not their own when they appeared to assume the truth of the propositions demonstrated by Newton. When we have such a striking proof how Roman Catholic divines will, in order to preserve external unity, deny their most certain convictions, what certainty can we have that any Roman Catholic priest really believes what he says when he professes his faith in transubstantiation

or in the immaculate conception, or, perhaps, in the miracle of La Salette?

These prohibitions remained in force for more than a century. At the beginning of the present century the astronomer, Lalande, made great exertions at Rome to have the names of Galileo, Copernicus, and Foscarini removed from the index; but it was all in vain. It was thought then too dishonouring to the Church of Rome to ask her to own herself wrong in a condemnation which she had pronounced so solemnly and adhered to so long. Accordingly, the index for 1828 contains the names of these three culprits, but the prohibition against "all books teaching the mobility of the earth" has been quietly dropped out of the later editions of the index. At length, at the accession of Gregory XVI., the predecessor of the present Pope, the important step was taken, and all attempts to insist on men's believing in the immobility of the earth were finally abandoned. For the first time for some two hundred years an index of prohibited books was published, in which no confession of previous error was made, but the names of Galileo, Copernicus, and Foscarini were silently omitted. The three delinquents might very nearly use the Apostle's language, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and now do they thrust us out privily." But we suppose that it would have been absurd to expect from the Church of Rome any more open confession that she had been so many years using all her authority in support of an utterly false opinion.

And now what is to be said by way of apology for the infallible tribunal? This will best appear from what the Clifton tract writer says in support of his position—that Galileo was quite right in making his abjuration, even though at the moment of his retraction he felt the most intimate confidence that his theory would eventually be proved to be true; nay, that he was bound in charity to make such a retraction, because that at the time the arguments by which he supported his theory fell short of demonstration; and because in the then state of Scriptural interpretation his opinions were likely to prejudice in men's minds their respect for the Bible—that he might, therefore, lawfully declare that he had never held his doctrines to be true; that is, *demonstratively proved*: he might abjure them as false and heretical, *which they were* in the then state of Biblical interpretation. "He would thus condemn and renounce his doctrine only in the same sense in which the Inquisition and the Index had done so before; that is, simply as being accidentally contrary to the dignity and estimation of Scripture, and as being false in the sense of unproved."

Did any one ever hear of such juggling with language? False in the sense of unproved!! The writer might just as well have said false in the sense of true. What idiots does he calculate on for readers when he tries to persuade them that to declare that a doctrine is absurd, false, and expressly contrary to Holy Scripture means nothing more than that the arguments which support it fall short of demonstration? Besides, it would be for astronomers and not for theologians to judge whether the arguments by which Galileo supported his views amounted to demonstration or not. If they undertook to find fault with arguments which men of science have since found to be abundantly conclusive, they were justly punished for "poking their nose into what was other people's business." And what does the writer mean by saying that Galileo's doctrines were "false and heretical in the then state of scriptural interpretation." Is not this precisely what we are asserting? Roman Catholics taunt Protestants with the differences which exist between them in their interpretation of Scripture, and they tell us that they are exempt from error because they have an infallible interpreter of Scripture. But if they had an infallible interpretation, how could a doctrine be false and heretical and opposed to Scripture at one time, and agreeable to Scripture at another?

It is all very well for Protestants, who claim no infallibility, to compare their knowledge complacently with that of their predecessors, or to take credit for the advance which the science of Scripture interpretation may have made. But what is perfect can admit of no improvement; and if the Church of Rome had had an infallible interpretation of the Bible in Galileo's time, it could not differ from whatever is the correct interpretation now.

Failing this attempt to explain away the condemnation of the Copernican doctrines, we are told that the tribunal which condemned them was not the pope, speaking infallibly. It is pretty clear he was not speaking infallibly when he condemned them; but if his infallibility was dormant then, we are at a loss to know how any one can put trust in it hereafter. Assuredly, Galileo and the Copernicans of his day were not allowed to suppose that if they persisted in their heresy they would resist anything short of infallible wisdom. They were pressed with the words of the bull of Sixtus V., by which the Congregation of the Index was remodelled. "They are to examine and expose the books which are repugnant to the Catholic doctrines and Christian discipline, and after reporting on them to us, they are to condemn them by our authority." Thus, even if we had not independent knowledge that the pope was heartily consenting and co-operating in the condemnation of the books which teach the immobility of the earth, the acts of the Congregation of the Index must be acknowledged as fully sanctioned by him. But even more than the acts of the Congregation of Index must the acts of the Roman Inquisition be re-

garded as expressing the deliberate sentiments of the Church of Rome. Can it be maintained that a Church possessing an infallible guide to secure her from heresy should appoint a special tribunal for the expulsion of heresy, and that that tribunal should be left in uncertainty what is or is not heresy. It is quite true that the popes appear to think this gift of infallibility quite too precious for every day use, and it is true that when a disputed question arises it is the hardest matter in the world to obtain a decision on it from the infallible authority. But there are some occasions which would extort speech from the most taciturn of human beings, and we should imagine that the most silent of men might be induced to speak if he saw a fellow-creature about to be severely punished, perhaps burnt alive, in his name and by his alleged authority, upon a charge of heresy, which he infallibly knew all the time to be no heresy at all; nay, when he ought to have known that the accused party was in the right and his judges quite wrong. We have seen to what harsh treatment Galileo was subjected, notwithstanding his abjuration, and notwithstanding that by avoiding even to state his belief in express words he was only alleged to be "vehemently suspected" of the heresy of believing in the earth's diurnal motion. But suppose that he had refused to make that abjuration, and had stated in plain language that he persisted in believing the Copernican doctrines, he would have incurred all the penalties to which obstinate heresy is liable, and might have been burned alive like Fulgentio Manfredi or Carnesecchi, or walled up like Friar Thomas Fabiano or Francesco Soldati.\* And we are asked to believe that the pope appointed a tribunal for the punishment of heresy, and that though he has an infallible gift for the discernment of heresy, his agents, acting under his authority and with his hearty approbation, are unable to discern truth from falsehood, and persecute as heresy what must now be acknowledged to be unquestionable truth.

To conclude, then, the history of Galileo makes short work of the question, Is it possible for the Church of Rome to err in her interpretation of Scripture, or to mistake in what she teaches to be an essential part of the Christian faith? She can err, for she has erred. She has made many errors more dangerous to the souls of men, but never committed any blunder more calculated to pour contempt on her own pretensions in the minds of all thinking men than when she persisted for about two hundred years in teaching that it was the doctrine of the Bible, and, therefore, an essential part of the Catholic faith, that the earth stood still and that the sun and planets revolve daily round it.

## THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

No. II.

In our last number we made some remarks on the right and duty of exercising private judgment in matters of religion, and we proposed to consider some of the common mistakes and misrepresentations which prevail respecting it. We showed how utterly unfounded is the charge brought against this Protestant principle by Romish writers, that it allows every individual Christian an *absolute and unlimited* licence in judging of all questions connected with religion. We now proceed to notice a little more in detail some of the various forms under which this gross perversion of the truth is met with in the works of Romish divines.

It is, then, boldly asserted that by this principle every consistent Protestant is bound to take the Bible, and make out from it, and from it alone, a system of religion for himself, without any regard whatever to human teaching or authority. And it must be confessed that the rash and injudicious statements of some Protestant controversialists have given some countenance to the justice of this charge. Not contented with maintaining, as all Protestants most strenuously do, that the Bible is the sole rule of faith, they have, in their zeal against unscriptural tradition, expressed themselves in such a way as to imply that no means of religious instruction, save and except the Bible alone, is lawful, and, therefore, that Creeds and Church teaching of all kinds are, at best, unnecessary appendages to Scripture. They have so maintained the right of private judgment as to appear to contend for the most unrestrained exercise of arbitrary private interpretation of the Bible; and as if, in the study of the inspired volume, the use of those means which are necessary to the right understanding of any ordinary book might and ought to be dispensed with. Injudicious statements of this kind, on the part of a few over-zealous champions of Protestantism, have, as we have said, furnished their opponents with an argument against the principle of private judgment, of which they have not failed to avail themselves.

Nor is this the only use which the opponents of Protestantism make of such rash assertions. They easily convert them into an argument for blind submission to Church authority. A man, say they, must derive his religion either from his own unaided study of the Bible (as you, Protestants, affirm), or from the authoritative teaching of an infallible Church (as we, Roman Catholics, hold). This you must admit to be the only alternative. Now, your theory we can show to be untenable; therefore, ours must be the true one. That such a theory of private

\* See Gibbins's Records of the Roman Inquisition under the above names.